Numb. CXLVIII.

The GUARDIAN.

——————Fas eſt & ab Hoſte doceri.

Monday, Auguſt 31. 1713.

THERE is a kind of Apothegm, which I have frequently met with in my Reading, to this purpoſe; *That there are few, if any Books, out of which a Man of Learning may not extract ſomething for his uſe.* I have often experienced the Truth of this Maxim, when, calling in at my Bookſeller's, I have taken the Book next to my Hand off the Counter, to employ the Minutes I have been obliged to linger away there, in waiting for one Friend or other. Yeſterday, when I came there, the *Turkiſh Tales* happened to lie in my way; upon opening of that amuſing Author, I happened to dip upon a ſhort Tale, which gave me a great many ſerious Reflections. The very ſame Fable may fall into the Hands of a great many Men of Wit and Pleaſure, who, 'tis probable, will read it with a Sneer; but ſince it may as probably Divert and Inſtruct a great many Perſons of plain and virtuous Minds, I ſhall make no ſcruple of making it the Entertainment of this Day's Paper. The Moral to be drawn from it is intirely Chriſtian, and is ſo very obvious, that I ſhall leave to every Reader the Pleaſure of picking it out for himſelf.

The Hiſtory of Santon Barſiſa.

THere was formerly a *Santon* whoſe Name was *Barſiſa*, which for the Space of an hundred Years very fervently apply'd himſelf to Prayer; and ſcarce ever went out of the Grotto in which he made his Reſidence, for fear of expoſing himſelf to the Danger of offending God. He faſted in the Day-time, and watch'd in the Night; all the Inhabitants of the Country had ſuch a great Veneration for him, and ſo highly valu'd his Prayers, that they commonly apply'd to him when they had any Favour to beg of Heaven. When he made Vows for the Health of a ſick Perſon, the Patient was immediately cur'd.

It happen'd that the Daughter of the King of that Country fell into a dangerous Diſtemper, the Cauſe of which the Phyſicians could not diſcover, yet they continu'd preſcribing Remedies by gueſs; but inſtead of helping the Princeſs, they only augmented her Diſeaſe. In the mean time the King was inconſolable, for he paſſionately lov'd his Daughter; wherefore one Day, finding all Human Aſſiſtance vain, he declar'd it as his Opinion, that the Princeſs ought to be ſent to the *Santon Barſiſa*.

All the *Beys* applauded his Sentiment, and the King's Officers conducted her to the *Santon*; who, notwithſtanding his frozen Age, could not ſee ſuch a Beauty without being ſenſibly mov'd. He gaz'd on her with Pleaſure; and the Devil taking this Opportunity, whiſper'd in his Ear thus; *O Santon! don't let ſlip ſuch a fortunate Minute: Tell the King's Servants that it is requiſite for the Princeſs to paſs this Night in the Grotto, to ſee whether it will pleaſe God to cure her; that you will put up a Prayer for her, and that they need only come to fetch her to Morrow.*

How

(Price Two Pence.)

How weak is Man! The *Santon* follow'd the Devil's Advice, and did what he ſuggeſted to him. But the Officers, before they would yield to leave the Princeſs, ſent one of their Number to know the King's Pleaſure. That Monarch, who had an entire Confidence in *Barſiſa*, never in the leaſt ſcrupled the truſting of his Daughter with him. *I conſent*, ſaid he, *that ſhe ſtay with that Holy Man, and that he keep her as long as he pleaſes: I am wholly reſign'd on that Head.*

When the Officers had receiv'd the King's Anſwer they all retired, and the Princeſs remain'd alone with the Hermit. Night being come, the Devil preſented himſelf to the *Santon*, ſaying, *Canſt thou let ſlip ſo favourable an Opportunity with ſo charming a Creature? Fear not her telling of the Violence you offer her; if ſhe were then ſo indiſcreet as to reveal it, who will believe her? The Court, the City, and all the World are too much prepoſſeſs'd in your Favour, to give any Credit to ſuch a Report. You may do any thing unpuniſh'd, when arm'd by the great Reputation for Wiſdom which you have acquir'd.* The unfortunate *Barſiſa* was ſo weak as to hearken to the Enemy of Mankind. He approach'd the Princeſs, took her into his Arms, and in a Moment cancell'd a Virtue of an hundred Years Duration.

He had no ſooner perpetrated his Crime, than a thouſand avenging Horrors haunted him Night and Day. He thus accoſts the Devil: *O Wretch!* ſays he, *'tis thou which haſt deſtroy'd me! Thou haſt encompaſs'd me for a whole Age, and endeavour'd to ſeduce me; and now at laſt thou haſt gain'd thy End.* O Santon! anſwers the Devil, *don't reproach me with the Pleaſure you haſt enjoy'd. You may repent: But what is neceſſary for you is that the Princeſs is impregnated, and thy Sin will become publick: thou will become the Laughing ſtock of thoſe who admire and reverence thee at preſent, and thy King will put thee to an ignominious Death.*

Barſiſa, terrify'd by this Diſcourſe, ſays to the Devil, *What ſhall I do to prevent the Publication of my Shame? To hinder the Knowledge of your Crime you ought to commit a freſh one*, anſwer'd the Devil: *Kill the Princeſs, bury her at the Corner of the Grotto, and when the King's Meſſengers come to Morrow, tell them you have cur'd her, and that ſhe went from the Grotto very early in the Morning: They will believe you, and ſearch for her all over the City and Country; the King her Father will be in great Pain for her, but after ſeveral vain Searches it will wear off.*

The Hermit, abandon'd by God, purſuant to this Advice kill'd the Princeſs, bury'd her in a Corner of the Grotto, and the next Day told the Officers what the Devil bid him ſay. They made diligent Enquiry for the King's Daughter, but not being able to hear of her, they deſpair'd of finding her, when the Devil told them that all their Search for the Princeſs was vain; and relating what had paſs'd betwixt her and the *Santon*, he told them the Place where ſhe was interred. The Officers immediately went to the Grotto, ſeiz'd *Barſiſa*, and found the Princeſs's Body in the Place to which the Devil had directed them; whereupon they took up the Corps, and carry'd that and the *Santon* to the Palace.

When the King ſaw his Daughter dead, and was inform'd of the whole Event, he broke out into Tears and bitter Lamentations; and aſſembling the Doctors, he laid the *Santon*'s Crime before them, and ask'd their Advice how he ſhould be puniſh'd. All the Doctors condemn'd him to Death, upon which the King order'd him to be hang'd: Accordingly a Gibbet was erected: the Hermit went up the Ladder, and when he was going to be turn'd off, the Devil whiſper'd in his Ear theſe Words; *O* Santon! *if you will worſhip me I will extricate you out of this Difficulty, and tranſport you two thouſand Leagues from hence, into a Country where you ſhall be reverenc'd by Men, as much as you were before this Adventure. I am content*, ſays *Barſiſa*; *deliver me, and I will worſhip thee. Give me firſt a Sign of Adoration*, replies the Devil; whereupon the *Santon* bow'd his Head, and ſaid, *I give my ſelf to you.* The Devil then raiſing his Voice, ſaid, *O* Barſiſa, *I am ſatisfy'd; I have obtain'd what I deſir'd*: And with theſe Words ſpitting in his Face, he diſappear'd; and the deluded *Santon* was hang'd.

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